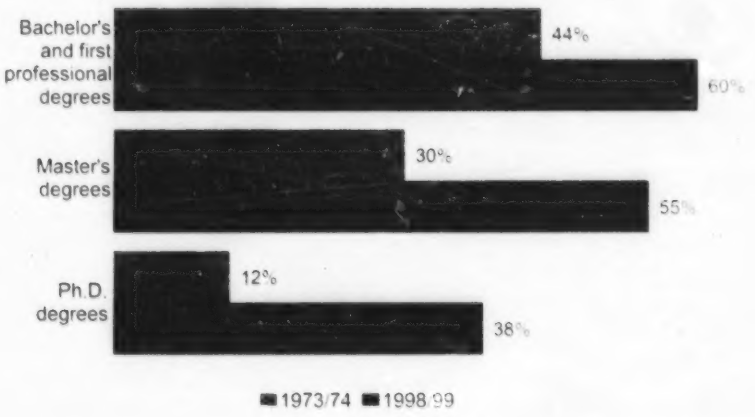
Women's Education in Nova Scotia
25 Years of Change

Over the last twenty-five years, women in Nova Scotia have made tremendous progress with respect to their educational attainment and advancement. In 1998/99, female students in Nova Scotia were granted 60% of all Bachelor's degrees, 55% of all Master's degrees and 38% of all Ph.D. degrees. Female students in Nova Scotian universities now outnumber (58% versus 42%) male students at the undergraduate level and comprise half of graduate level students. In certain disciplines, women's advancement has been particularly noticeable. Unlike 25 years ago, women in commerce/business administration, medicine, and law, are now equally represented in the student body of the province's universities. While much progress has been made, women still lag behind in other areas, most notably, in trades and technology, and engineering and applied sciences.

Proportion of University Degrees Granted to Women
Nova Scotia, 1973/74 and 1998/99

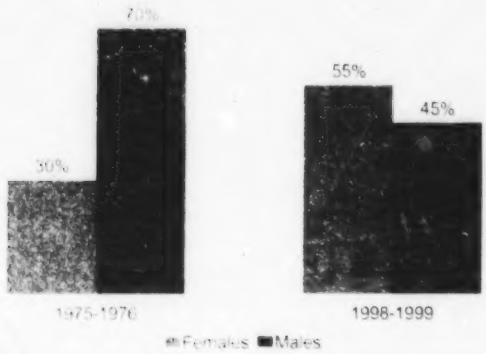


Source: Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 81-229 (1974-1976, (2000)

Nova Scotia Advisory Council
on the Status of Women
PO Box 745, Halifax, NS B3J 2T3

Phone: 424-8662, fax: 424-0573
Toll-free in NS: 1-800-565-8662
e-mail: nsacsw@gov.ns.ca
Internet: http://www.gov.ns.ca/staw

Commerce/Business Administration
Full-Time Undergraduates, Nova Scotia



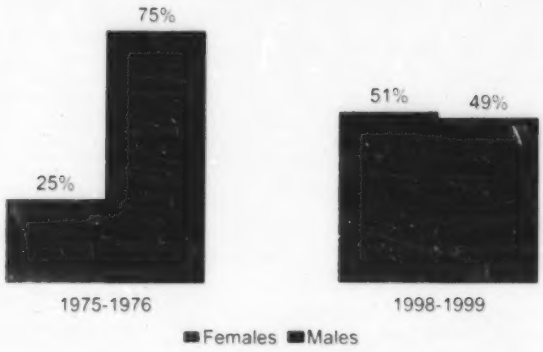
Enrolment of women in undergraduate commerce and business administration programs has increased substantially over the past 25 years. Women now comprise 55 percent of students in these university programs.

Source: Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 81-229 (1974-1976); (2000)

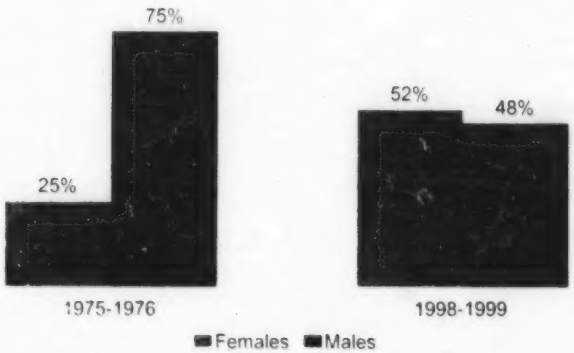
Medicine
Full-Time Undergraduates, Nova Scotia

Women in Nova Scotia have doubled the proportion of their enrolment in medicine over the past 25 years. Women now comprise half (51%) of medical students in the province.

Source: Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 81-229 (1974-1976); (2000)



Law
Full-Time Undergraduates, Nova Scotia



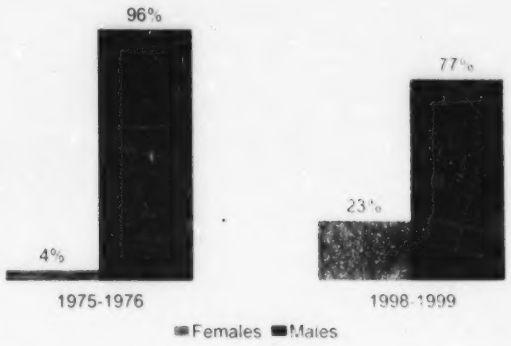
Women have also doubled their representation in the study of law over the past 25 years. Women now comprise slightly more than half (52%) of law students in Nova Scotia.

Source: Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 81-229 (1974-1976); (2000)

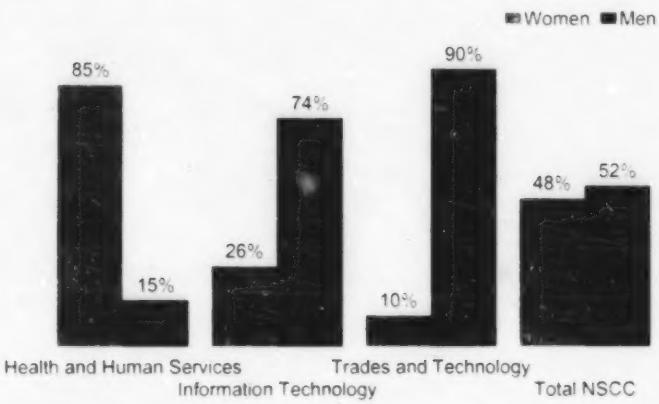
Engineering and Applied Sciences
Full-Time Undergraduates, Nova Scotia

Though women have clearly made some progress towards equality in the study of engineering and applied sciences, they still comprise less than a quarter of students in these fields.

Source: Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 81-229 (1974-1976), (2000)



Community College Programs by Sex
Nova Scotia, 2001-2002



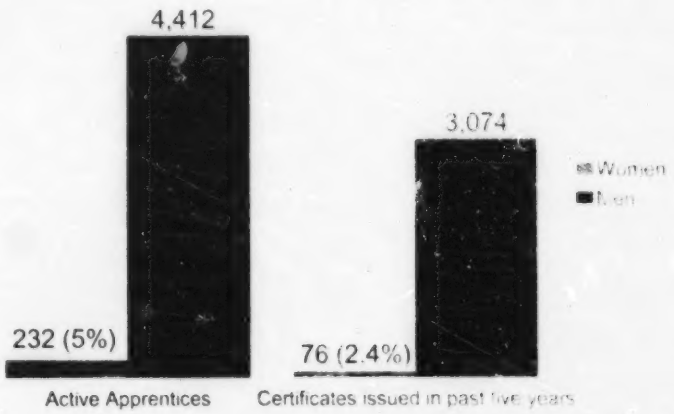
While women comprise close to half (48%) of total enrolment in Nova Scotia Community College, they currently make up only 10 percent of students in trades and technology and only a quarter of students in information technology (IT).

Source: NSCC enrolment database (Fall 2001)

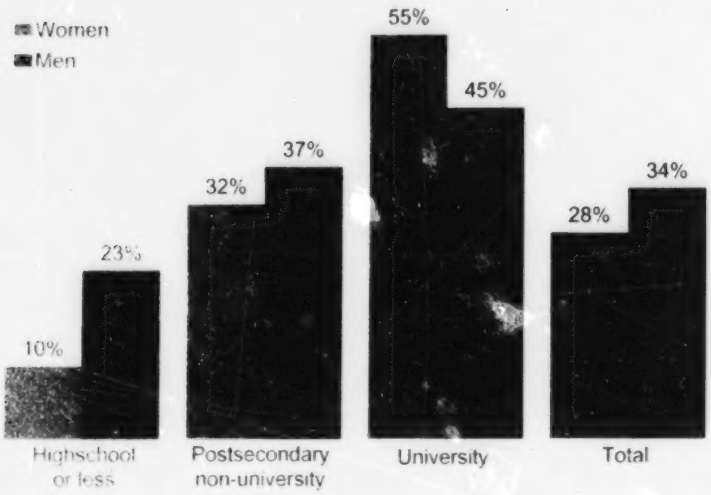
Apprenticeship Programs by Sex
Nova Scotia, 2002

Women are extremely under-represented in apprenticeship programs in Nova Scotia. Currently, women make up only 5% of active apprentices in the province. Over the past five years, only 2.4% of apprenticeship certificates have been issued to women.

Source: NS Dept. of Education, Apprenticeship Training database (Feb. 2002)



Participation in Job-Related Education and Training by Sex and Educational Attainment Nova Scotia, 1997



Women are not as likely as men to participate in job-related education and training unless they already have high education. Women with high school or less are much less likely than men at the same educational level to have job-related education and training.

Source: Statistics Canada and Council of Ministers of Education, Canada Education Indicators in Canada, 1999

The Journey Continues: Opportunities and Barriers to Women's Educational Parity

There is much to be celebrated with respect to the increased educational attainment of women in Nova Scotia. Women now comprise close to half of students enroled at Nova Scotia Community College. However, more than half of these female students are in business administration (31%) or human services (26%) rather than in the more lucrative IT (5%) or trades and technology (6%) fields. Given projected shortages of skilled workers and tradespersons, more efforts must be made by governments, employers, trades and technology organizations, by educators at all levels, and by parents to attract girls and women to trade and technology training programs and careers.

Our knowledge-based economy requires life-long learning of its workers. Women with lower levels of education and income face great difficulty in gaining access to continuing education. There is no doubt that access to education is once again becoming more restrictive. Crushing debt loads are particularly harmful to women, whose earning power is often limited because of family work and unpaid care-giving responsibilities. This issue is especially troubling for low-income single mothers who want to upgrade their education and skills, enhance their long-term career prospects, and improve the financial situation of their families.

These educational issues and others will be discussed in greater detail in Part 4 of Women in Nova Scotia: A Statistical Series (Education and Training), which will be released by the Advisory Council in April, 2002.